

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

House Bill 5004: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING - Support

House Bill 6693 - AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING - Support

**Senate Bill 1057 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND
EARLY VOTING - Support**

**Senate Bill 1064 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY
VOTING - Support**

**Senate Joint Resolution No. 29 - RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO
THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING -
Support**

**House Joint Resolution No. 1 - RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING
- Support**

Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Travis Woodward, I am a resident of Hamden, and an engineer in the Connecticut Department of Transportation. I am also the president of CSEA SEIU Local 2001, a labor union representing over 25,000 state, municipal, board of education, active and retired, public and private sector workers. I offer the following testimony in support of creating a strong system of early voting and no excuse absentee voting:

As you undertake the work of finalizing proposed legislation to implement Early Voting—and as you prepare to vote on whether to adopt the proposed resolution to amend the state constitution to allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting, as well as on improving the absentee ballot counting process—I urge that you:

- Pass legislation that designs and fully funds Connecticut's first-ever early in-person voting system by March, 2023 to give town elections officials time to incorporate any budgetary changes in advance of the 2023 municipal election cycle. Connecticut voters deserve a baseline of at least two weeks of Early Voting that includes weekend and evening hours—with the funded option for higher population towns to provide multiple locations in addition to the office of the registrar;
- Adopt the proposed resolution for Connecticut to join 35 other states that allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting—for a required second time by simple majority in both chambers during this 2023 legislative session. This cannot wait until a 2024 short session when legislative time constraints will be severe. Voters need to know right away if No-Excuse Absentee Voting will be on the statewide ballot in 2024; and
- Pass legislation that allows the municipal clerk to deliver absentee ballots to the ballot counters before or at 6 PM on the day of an election and notification of voters whose

absentee ballots may be rejected due to a defect so that voters can either correct the defect or vote in person. Include prepaid postage for the return of absentee ballots. And, ensure that completed and signed absentee ballot applications are public records subject to public inspection.

CSEA members, whether they are retirees or still working as public employees, want to be able to do their civic duty and participate in our elections. However, when the ability to participate in an election is restricted to one day only, that commitment to our democracy can run into other commitments, from work to family to something unexpected. The bills before you will help create a safe and secure system of voting that will make our elections more open, more inclusive, and more representative of our state's residents.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Travis Woodward
Hamden, CT